

Penn State's on-campus print center upgrades its capabilities on a tight budget—and boosts its bottom line by more than 50%.

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Productivity and capability are up. Costs are down.

All with the help of Xerox Digital Presses and Production Printers.



Photo credit: Jeff Wirth, 2007

Challenge

The Penn State University Multimedia and Print Center (MPC) serves one of the largest and most respected universities in the nation. In order to keep up with the demands of such a vast enterprise, MPC needed to increase productivity and volume, cut costs, and add flexibility and capability to its operation—all at the same time.

The root of the problem was that they were staffed and equipped for 1970s-level production. Most of the campus viewed it as another vendor, rather than a key component of the university. Under new leadership, the goal was to raise the strategic relevance of the Center within the organization, and demonstrate how its services could align with the university's strategic initiatives.

According to MPC Director Abbas Badani, the Center had become “stagnant”—and he was determined to change its perception as a commodity provider of printing/duplicating and mailing services. To do this, he had to identify the strategic, high-value applications sponsored by departments like recruitment/admissions, athletics, and foundation development—and demonstrate that MPC could execute them more quickly, and with equal or better quality, than outside print shops.

Solution

The solution was simple, but challenging: working within rigid financial constraints, the Center needed to update and right-size its production equipment to meet the university's printing and duplicating needs, while offering more value to help attract new customers.

With the help of Xerox equipment, MPC was able to achieve its goals. The Center added new Xerox production printers, with speeds more appropriate to the in-plant's actual volume. MPC also purchased a new computer-to-plate machine, a new press, and an addressing system to drastically increase its productivity and meet its needs for long-run print jobs.

In addition, MPC upgraded its Xerox DocuColor® 2060 Color Printer to a DocuColor 6060, and replaced its monochrome devices with three Xerox Nuvera® printers to boost print quality—all supported by a Xerox FreeFlow® Scan and Makeready® solution.

To make the Center's services more accessible to the campus, MPC has turned to Xerox partner NowDocs to develop a Web portal storefront, enabling remote print-job submissions and ordering. Another Xerox product, FreeFlow Process Manager™, helped MPC produce more complex production applications in an automated fashion. Plus, through its Web Portal, MPC has, in essence, become the “print broker” for all of the university's printing needs. For jobs that could be more economically produced by an off-campus print service provider, MPC has certified local providers who can bid on print jobs that are posted on MPC's Web Portal. This process uses MPC's printing expertise to maximize savings by either completing the jobs within the MPC facility, or by using an outside print service provider that offers the best value and price.

It worked so well that four years later, increasing demand for color work pushed MPC's digital color press to its limits—and it was time to take the Center's capabilities to the next level. MPC recently made the transition to a Xerox iGen3® Digital Color Press to improve the quality and volume of its color output and to enable new applications.

Benefits

The increased speed and improved workflow had a dramatic effect on the Center's bottom line. The initial overall operation upgrade (including Xerox equipment and those of other companies) generated additional revenues and a bottom-line improvement of close to 50%. The Web portal job submission solution is increasing in acceptance, helping funnel more jobs to MPC to be produced in the most competitive and efficient manner for both internal and external clients.

The success of the upgrade is an example of how offset and digital printing technologies can work together to help in-plants achieve strategic relevance within their organizations. Xerox equipment continues to churn out high-quality course packs, booklets, flyers, brochures, and variable data applications. Static jobs with long run lengths are generally assigned an offset workflow. As MPC continues to win over new customers from critical “AAA” departments (Admissions, Athletics, Alumni), its personalized variable data needs will continue to grow and help the Center naturally gravitate toward a digital workflow.

And in just 18 months, the recent upgrade to an iGen3 Digital Color Press has helped the Center increase its digital color volume by more than 50%, while boosting print quality and capturing new jobs. As the business of printing has evolved, it has allowed MPC to meet the increasing demands of customers and tightening deadlines that go with it.

In addition, the greater capabilities of the iGen3 have allowed the Center to offer its customers a wider range of solutions and applications. “The ability to run larger-size media has made a huge difference,” said Badani. “The extra couple of inches (14” x 20” sheet sizes) help us run more types of applications.” This helps the Center continue to prove its value within the organization. “We have to constantly keep our ear to the ground as to what the University needs,” Badani explained. “The traditional static model is no longer a guarantee for success.”



Penn State University Multimedia and Print Center (MPC)

For more than 20 years, Xerox has maintained a strong relationship with Penn State University. With more than 84,000 students, Penn State is one of the 10 largest public universities in the U.S.—and MPC has been a part of its community since the 1930s. For the last 30 of those years, it has occupied the current 45,000-square-foot, on-campus location in a building that was constructed especially for the print center. It currently employs about 75 people, 10-15 of whom are students. Over the years, MPC continued to expand its capabilities and facilities, adding a mailing and addressing wing in the mid-'80s and regularly updating the Center's equipment. In fact, MPC was the first printer in the area to offer desktop publishing, and the first to open a film and image center.

MPC remains committed to providing customers with the latest technology and resources, innovative solutions, and exceptional service. The Center works closely with the Department of University Publications to ensure that all communications—including course packs, data center applications, marketing collateral, direct mail pieces, posters, letterhead, business cards, and more—present a consistent, high-quality image.

“As an organization, we look at partnerships, not just equipment. Xerox has been an excellent partner in helping enable the success of our operation.”

—Abbas Badani, Director, Penn State University Multimedia and Print Center

On the Web: www.multimediacenter.psu.edu